BISS Biodiversity Information Science and Standards

Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 2: e26126
doi: 10.3897/biss.2.26126

OPEN ACCESS

Conference Abstract

Planning for when Push Comes to Shove: Mitigating Risk; Recovering from Disaster.

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Received: 24 Apr 2018 | Published: 04 Jul 2018

Citation: Henry D, McCubbin M, Henry S (2018) Planning for when Push Comes to Shove: Mitigating Risk; Recovering from Disaster. Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 2: e26126.
https://doi.org/10.3897/biss.2.26126

Abstract

Established in 1854, Museums Victoria manages and develops collections in the disciplines of natural sciences, indigenous cultures, and history and technology. The natural sciences component consists of about 17 million specimens across the disciplines of zoology, palaeontology, and geosciences. Over the past 7 years, Museums Victoria undertook a range of projects to mitigate risk and respond to disasters. These projects were driven by the Strategic Collection Management group but involved a multidisciplinary team including Collection Managers, Researchers, Conservators and Facilities Managers. The results informed strategic and workforce planning and resulted in successful bids for significant project-based funding to address areas of greatest risk.

These projects include:

- A Collection Risk Assessment and Management project (CRAM), based on the methodology developed by Robert Waller (formerly of the Canadian Museum of Nature), which examined vulnerability of collections to 10 agents of risk. This project identified over 100 actions to reduce risk, including mitigation measures on the micro level (e.g. creation of microclimates for specimens), the macro level (e.g. targeting registration and location control resources) and the grand scale (e.g. development of new storage facilities).

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Through prioritising outcomes by risk impact, additional funding was secured to relocate collections from inappropriate building facilities; genetic collections were rehoused from freezers into a liquid nitrogen cryobank facility, the first of its kind in an Australian museum. Risks associated with security issues and with the disassociation of data from specimens are being addressed by audit processes and providing additional funding for registration projects.

- A compliance project to ensure 'approved borrower' status and protection under the recently enacted Australian Federal Government anti-seizure legislation: the *Protection of Cultural Objects on Loan (2013)* (PICOL). Museums Victoria has reviewed acquisition and loans policies and procedures to ensure best practice in loans policy, provenance checking, and due diligence research.
- The development of venue-specific Disaster Plans based on an all-hazards approach.

At the institutional level, the Museum has a Crisis Management Plan and a Business Continuity Plan.

Experience shows *Push* will inevitably come to *Shove*: Risk management requires a strategic approach with planning, training and regular review essential. Plan to prevent, plan to prepare, plan to respond, and plan to recover

Keywords

Risk Management, Disaster Recovery, Disaster Planning, Natural Science Collections

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